

NUCLEAR CRISIS PROJECT

Berlin Crisis Working Group

with

Martin Hillenbrand

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James Blight: Today, I am pleased to welcome Ambassador Martin Hillenbrand. Since he was involved in the Berlin crisis during both the Eisenhower and the Kennedy Administrations, Ambassador Hillenbrand is almost uniquely qualified to help us deal with some very pertinent questions concerning this period in American relations with Germany and the Soviet Union. It might appeal to the "control group" mentality we have here that he will be presenting to us his view of the comparison and relationship between these two presidents. I think we will find that there are some striking similarities and some real contrasts. He also may be able to help us rethink the role of Dean Rusk and the State Department during the Berlin Crisis.

Ambassador Hillenbrand has his M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia University. He was head of the German desk at the State Department from 1950-1952; was in Paris from 1952-1956 and was Political Advisor to the American Mission in Berlin from 1956-1958. Finally -- what will be central the interests of our group here -- he served as Director of the Office of German Affairs at the State Department in Washington from fall, 1958 through 1963. In 1963, he became Deputy Chief of the Mission and later, among other significant postings, was Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany. He is now the Dean Rusk Professor of Political Science at the University of Georgia and head of its Institute for Global Security Studies.

Martin Hillenbrand: I will try to limit my remarks to fifteen minutes and not attempt to regurgitate the chapter on the Berlin Crisis in the book I am writing. I hope you all at least had a chance to look it over. I will instead use the time to compare certain aspects of the handling of the crisis by the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations. I feel this is very useful in understanding what went on during the Berlin Crisis.

In my opinion there are two major points of contrast in the leadership of these two administrations:

1) It is fair to say that there was a vast difference in the style and organizational structure of Dwight Eisenhower's government as compared to that of John Kennedy.

2) The personalities and psychologies of these two presidents as well as those of the advisors surrounding them in the decision-making process were very different.

No one argued with Eisenhower. He was the supreme, victorious military commander. When it came time for a decision to be made, he made it with confidence that his background and knowledge made him able to make the correct choices. John Foster Dulles, on the other hand, did not play a major role in the handling of the Berlin crisis, except in the initial stages when dealing with the Soviets and the ultimatum which Khrushchev issued. The Secretary of

State was not, despite his hawkish reputation, a man who engaged in brinkmanship. He sought ways to find a basis for negotiation and for always leaving Khrushchev a way out rather than forcing him into a corner. This may seem atypical of the usual cold warrior stereotype attributed to Dulles. One should remember, however, that Dulles had a finely honed lawyer's mind. He argued in legalistic terms and always used a calm, logical approach. His successor, Christian Herter, was a lesser man in many respects, although a good man. He did quickly establish a rapport with Eisenhower and he learned to rely heavily on the staff that he did have -- much more so than Dulles.

Structurally, the Eisenhower Administration, both in the State Department and the government as a whole, was relatively thin. There was no piling up of hierarchies in the upper echelons of decision-making. This made it possible for someone of medium rank, such as I was at the time, to play a more active role. As a personality, Eisenhower was the supreme commander: although he didn't like to be bothered with details, he was unquestionably in control, especially during the Berlin crisis. He was comfortable delegating authority, especially to us in the State Department.

This was replaced by an Administration in which there was much hierarchical layering. John Kennedy and his staff were perhaps intellectually more distinguished, but there was also a certain degree of arrogance that did not exist under Eisenhower. This translated into unnecessary over-dramatization. There was definitely too much bureaucracy and consequent diffusion of authority. For example, while under Eisenhower foreign policy was hardly ever formulated by the Department of Defense, Bob McNamara, under Kennedy, was one of the primary formulators of 1961 Berlin policy and was a major figure at most of the conferences. This tended, almost unconsciously, to transform the Berlin crisis into a military confrontation.

The basic difference, therefore, lay in a group of people in the Kennedy Administration who came to their positions with little experience in government. They were highly intelligent and articulate, but also arrogant. In the matter of the Berlin Crisis, they seemed to approach their tasks with a total disregard of the past. They felt that much of what had gone on before with regard to this situation was either irrelevant or bad. They did not seem to realize that you cannot start from "ground zero" with a situation such as this that had been in existence for almost two and a half years already and, in certain important respects, had existed since the end of World War II. Of course, there were people such as Dean Rusk and McGeorge Bundy who did understand that there had to be some knowledge and use of the past. Rusk was especially sensitive to the evolving historical nature of the Berlin situation.

I think one distinction that is often more misleading than it is helpful is that of hawks and doves, or hardliners and softliners. This black and white shorthand description definitely needs to be much more nuanced, if it is at all to reflect reality. Of course there were people such as Dean Acheson who in his two famous memoranda in the spring and early summer of 1961 represented one extreme of hawkishness. However, the Kennedy Administration, from the President on down, took these much more seriously than they should have. Acheson was frustrated, an extremist, and overreaction to his incendiary memoranda had a lot to do with the "crisis atmosphere" of the summer and the fall of 1961. There was never a real possibility that the military measures would be adopted as he proposed. He wanted to, in effect, threaten the Soviet Union with an arms race. We would start, if Acheson had his way, going through the initial motions of a military build-up in order to threaten the

Soviet Union. This logic of Acheson's was consistent with Herman Kahn's pamphlets and briefings going back to 1957-58.

One indication of the Berlin problem for the Kennedy Administration was this: it was Dean Rusk in the basement of the State Department, during the transition period, who learned more quickly than anyone else how to deal correctly with the Berlin situation. He grasped the essentials of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. For example, he knew that it was important to engage the Soviets in discussions merely to find some basis for negotiations. All through late 1961 and 1962, Rusk sought to do this in his endless sessions with Gromyko. These were exploratory talks to see if some mutual ground existed. Rusk understood that the Berlin problem did not necessarily translate into a Berlin crisis, so long as one kept searching for common ground. Rusk's colleagues in the White House and Defense Department did not seem to appreciate this.

One other point which I feel I must address was made by Tom Schoenbaum in his chapter you have read on Dean Rusk and the Berlin crisis. He talks of the famous delay in the memoranda responding to Khrushchev's ultimatum of June 4, 1961. Schoenbaum documents the truth: we in the State Department kept a day by day account which shows that the memoranda were lost in the White House. The State Department was, in the Kennedy years, usually blamed for what was the fault of inept handling by the White House. This, by the way, is true of most White Houses, though it was especially characteristic of the Kennedy White House.

Also, the United States was not free to act unilaterally on the Berlin issue. We had to be tripartite in our decisions, clearing things with French and British. This is something we in the State Department knew from experience. The Kennedy White House had to learn this pretty much from scratch.

This brings me to another point. We don't know how much information Khrushchev had about our plans, especially our military contingency planning. Of course, there was the infamous Mr. Paque who was in charge of NATO documents in Paris, who was feeding the Soviets information, including NATO documents relating to Live Oak (Live Oak was the special headquarters under Norstad which was set up to deal with the military aspects of the Berlin situation). The important point is that Khrushchev had a great deal more information about what we were trying to do than we had about what he intended. He knew, for example, that we had plans in the fall of 1961, for the use of use of several divisions to reopen access to Berlin if the need arose. And he probably knew a lot more than that. The French, however, even the Americans I think, would never, in practice, have accepted this. I have always believed that Khrushchev having this information was counterproductive to the forces of peace; he must have been horrified if he really believed we would actually do all the things he knew we were "planning." He must have thought we were crazy. But, in fact, our freedom to act in any real crisis, one in which the Soviets actually closed air and ground corridors, would have been far more limited than Khrushchev probably supposed. Understandably, the allies did not want to provoke another war in Europe.

I well recall the attempt of the Soviets in 1962 to hinder our access by putting chaff into the air corridors. We know now that this was ordered and supported by Moscow. If an Allied plane had been shot down, or perhaps a commercial airliner (there were three that continued flying through this: Pan Am, Air France, and British Airways), there would have been chaos. One would

like to know more about why the Soviets would involve themselves in such a scheme -- all after the Berlin "crisis" had supposedly ended.

I'll stop there in order for you to ask some questions. I am prepared to discuss anything about either the Eisenhower or Kennedy Administrations or whatever you think may be relevant to this topic.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

Blight: While the rest are gathering their thoughts, I would like to take the time to ask you one question. In the new oral history of a collection of interviews with Robert Kennedy, the President's brother often says that he remembers long conversations with his brother during that "scary summer" of 1961 when they estimated the chance of war over Berlin to be about one in five, about twenty percent, with all the possibilities that fraction involved for escalation to a nuclear war. A) Is that an accurate statement? Was it or was it not the prevailing view outside the White House that the risk of war over Berlin had risen that high? B) If not, what accounts for this atmosphere of a war-threatening crisis, at least, within the White House?

Hillenbrand: Of course, if you are scared, the word scary is an appropriate adjective. However, attempts, such as Robert Kennedy's to which you refer, to assess the chance of war with mathematical precision is ridiculous. Although no one in the State Department underestimated the gravity of our situation in Berlin, the Kennedy White House tended to dramatize the situation more than was warranted and, in fact, to define it as a crisis. We in the State Department saw from past experience that Khrushchev's threats can be withdrawn, his "ultimata" were not necessarily final. Kennedy was more apt than Eisenhower to take threats literally and also to worry unnecessarily about the escalation that might entail if the threats were carried out. The Acheson memoranda raised his level of fear and concern substantially. I recall that Abe Chayes, for example, felt we were sliding down a slippery slope which led into confrontation or even war with the Soviet Union. One must not underestimate the influence of those Acheson memoranda on the Kennedy people. Acheson's confrontational style, plus his credibility, led to a military approach, which in turn scared the hell out of people like Robert Kennedy and Abe Chayes. I think Dean Rusk grasped relatively early that the thing to do was to engage the Soviets in discussion. His main thrust was to get the French and the British to consent to his having open discussions with Gromyko to see if some agreement could be reached on a bilateral basis. Rusk was maligned for his emphasis on talking to the Soviets. But, in the end, he was vindicated, in my view.

Of course, we had our usual problems with the French. DeGaulle thought Khrushchev was a bluffer. His obdurate abstinence from negotiations therefore, made sense, at least to him. He felt that Khrushchev had engaged in outrageous bullying tactics at the Vienna summit since he thought Kennedy was weak. He therefore thought he could push Kennedy into making concessions on the Berlin issue. Eisenhower, on the other hand, enjoyed considerably more respect than Kennedy, since he was not only viewed as the President but also as the victorious supreme commander during the war. Kennedy's actions during

the summer of 1961, however, served eventually to dispel much of the doubt about his character and resolve as well as his willingness and ability to face up to a crisis.

Joseph Nye: At the end of the discussions we had last year on the Cuban missile crisis, we turned our attention to Berlin. The question was posed, "Was Berlin regarded as a dangerous nuclear crisis, like Cuba?" The Soviets said that Berlin and Cuba were totally different to them. The Soviets felt that they were in control during the Berlin Crisis, whereas the Cuban missile crisis seemed to carry a genuine risk of spinning out of control. I have two questions concerning this:

1) To what extent did you have DeGaulle's feeling that this was an elaborate bluff? That is, did you think that the word "crisis" applied to the Berlin situation?

2) In reference to the chaff in the airways, to what extent did the fact that things might have been getting out of control become a consideration in the way the situation was handled?

Hillenbrand: We certainly didn't act as if we thought it were a bluff. The term "Berlin crisis" has become so institutionalized over the years that it may be too late to change it. To use the word "crisis," however, when something lasts five years and goes through lulls and only a few tense moments, is misleading. Most of the time those of us dealing with Berlin did not feel as if we were in any "crisis." This is very different from those famous thirteen days of the Cuban missile crisis. I find the comments made by your Soviets, in fact, very perceptive. I think the Soviets felt they were largely in control, at least at the military level as far as what they could do in the Berlin context. We must never forget that Berlin is a solitary island in the midst of a vast Soviet controlled area. Why should the Soviets not feel in control? They were, to a great extent.

There were, of course, some things that the Soviets knew they could not control, which I always believed were very important in pushing the Soviets to take action. First of all was the "hemorrhaging" of the East German labor force and professional classes through Berlin into the West, which only the Wall brought effectively to an end. There was also the role that Berlin played as a meeting place between East and West, the headquarters of American intelligence operations and British and French intelligence operations in Eastern Europe. There was also the contagious effect that West Berlin, with its relative prosperity, had all over Eastern Europe, but particularly in East Germany. These factors meant Khrushchev wasn't completely master of the situation, although the wall certainly went a long way toward eliminating some of the features of the Berlin situation that were most objectionable to Khrushchev. Moreover, I think it is fair to say that Khrushchev was under intermittent but nevertheless significant pressure from Ulbricht and the East German regime to do something and, while the Soviets did not have much respect for Ulbricht as a person or the Germans as a people, they did feel that they had to deliver something. This was certainly among the motives that moved Khrushchev intermittently to become vehement on the Berlin issue, and it is certainly what drove him to approve the building of the Wall. So, I think that while we perhaps didn't feel in the State Department that the situation was inevitable or had anything like a twenty percent chance of escalating to a major nuclear exchange. Nevertheless, the inherent drama, the press coverage

and attention devoted to the subject of Berlin for nearly five years was bound to create anxieties. Many people seem to have concluded that, at some point, something could happen that would lead to a military confrontation. For example, there was the tank confrontation that General Clay engineered while he was in Berlin. No one knew where something like that might end, but fortunately Khrushchev withdrew his tanks first. I've always felt that Clay's actions in that case were uncalled for. He counted on Khrushchev to back down. But what would have happened if he had not? What then?

As far as the chaff harassment or any other of these situations for that matter -- the tank confrontation, the harassment of movements on the Autobahn, etc. -- we had noted, even before the Berlin crisis as such, that the Soviets went up to a point and then, if you can engage them in talks, they didn't necessarily cease and desist, but at least, they wouldn't go beyond that point. Eventually, if you worked out something, some sort of a deal with them, the harassments ceased. So I think there was always this thought, at least in the State Department, that we would be able to work out some agreement with the Soviets that would bring the whole thing to an end. That, of course, was the point of the papers, or "non-papers" really, that Rusk and Gromyko kept exchanging in the spring of 1962. Not that these papers had any standing, so to speak; but they were simply to determine whether a basis for negotiation even existed. The psychology that we in the State Department attributed to the Soviets in the Berlin crisis was, I still believe, basically correct. So, to come back to your initial point, there was a lesser degree of acute anxiety perhaps in the State Department than there was at least in portions of the White House. I think that is probably a correct appraisal. That is because we never believed for a moment the Soviets wanted to push the issue to war. We thought Khrushchev had a problem -- a host of problems, really -- regarding Berlin, and that he would be willing to talk about them. I think many in the White House and Defense Department must have believed otherwise.

Kerry Abelson: You say in your writings here that there was a feeling that the Soviets wouldn't close the trap, that they wouldn't take irrevocable actions. I was just wondering where this idea first emerged. Who was it that came up with this method of dealing with the Soviets? Did it come from Rusk and the State Department or from whom? Was there a group that consciously identified itself as soft-liners on Berlin who wanted negotiation, or was this a rather subjective idea? Did this learning take place in the Eisenhower Administration? Why did it not get passed on to Kennedy? Why do you think Rusk picked it up and the other people in the White House did not?

Hillenbrand: I think it was based on experience. After all, we had been dealing with the Soviets since 1945, in the German context: originally, in the Allied control of the mission, and subsequently, the American, British, and French ambassadors in Bonn had as their primary interlocuter the Soviet ambassador in Berlin. We had the feeling which was brought into the Eisenhower Administration that the trick was to continue to engage the Soviets in negotiations and that would relieve the ultimative pressure of their intermittent threats. The success of this approach was demonstrated repeatedly during the Eisenhower Administration. Of course, I think it is fair to say that those who became known as the soft-liners, or the doves (even though I don't think these terms are particularly useful) in the White House in the summer of

1961, and in the State Department, obviously were pressing for negotiations. That was supposedly against the alleged wishes of people like Acheson that we avoid negotiations altogether. Acheson felt we could not draft a negotiating proposal that would wash. He was in a sense the prisoner of his own logical mind. He may have been right, logically or technically, but he therefore failed to appreciate the importance of the process of negotiating with the Soviets. We had learned in the Eisenhower period that, with regard to the Soviets and the Berlin issue, talking does help relieve tension.

Abelson: This was, therefore, the conventional wisdom on Berlin from the Eisenhower and Dulles years?

Hillenbrand: That's right. In the Kennedy Administration, it was Rusk who picked it up first from "basement briefings." Rusk saw intuitively the importance of negotiations to relieve Soviet pressures on Berlin. But -- and this is critically important -- Rusk did not think we would arrive at an "answer" or "solution" to Berlin. The idea that even someone as smart as Abe Chayes could just sit down at his desk, draft a proposal for negotiating with the Soviets, and make it work, when we had been working on this idea for years, well, it was ridiculous. Of course, as I said much, if not most, of the work that had been done on Berlin before this time was largely ignored. There was very little transmission of knowledge from the Eisenhower Administration -- not that it wasn't contained in the linking memoranda written in the State Department early in 1961. But the information had no noticeable impact on anyone other than Rusk. So I think your original premise was correct: the first person to have no illusions about arriving at a negotiating position on Berlin was Rusk. He sought to relieve pressure on the Berlin situation. He did not seek to "solve" the Berlin "problem." The fact that many of the senior people in the Kennedy Administration believed they could solve this problem, was part of their arrogance, that I mentioned at the outset.

Nye: I just want to make sure I understood you about the process of learning across administrations: that Rusk, in the period when he was sitting in the basement of the State Department came to understand the situation pretty much as it was and that the rest of the Administration didn't learn.

Hillenbrand: The rest of the Administration, which at that point was concentrating on other matters, did not have the leisure nor perhaps the direct interest in Berlin (although that hit them between the eyes later, at the Vienna Summit). Rusk had the time to read and listen to people who were able to tell him about the past. I don't think the White House had that advantage. There was more to it than just time spent on the problem. The Kennedy White House much preferred solving problems to living with situations not of their making or choosing. But this also led to a certain amount of impatience with past methods. At least at first, they thought they could do better than the old hands.

Blight: Could we get a few words from Carl Kaysen, perhaps, about the Kennedy White House and the different assessments of the situation at the time?

Carl Kaysen: I wasn't down there until the end of the spring, so I can't comment on the transition or the early months of the Administration. I wanted to ask Martin a couple questions. Fyodor Burlatsky spontaneously made a comment to this group two weeks ago on the Berlin situation which was amazing to me. He said no one, not Khrushchev, nor anyone in the Soviet decision-making apparatus, thought we in the West would go to war over Berlin. So I asked, if that was so, if you felt that confident that the West would not go to war over Berlin, why didn't you just take it? Burlatsky responded that this would have been a "casus belli"; that it would have been a violation of the Four Powers Agreement. I found this to be strange and ironic, and it obviously was an incomplete and unresolved set of observations. There wasn't a chance to follow them up. One interpretation of Burlatsky's remarks would seem to support something Martin has said: that the Soviets had a clear idea of what would push the Allies into war over Berlin, and they had no intention of crossing that line.

I have two different questions for you. One is something you simply couldn't have included in your fifteen-minute introduction and maybe you would say a little something about it now. What was the Federal Republic's role in the communications between Adenauer and other Germans (but especially Adenauer) and the two presidents?

I also want to be sure I understood something you said about Adenauer correctly. Did you say that in effect no military contingency plans were made in Berlin command, in NATO or in Washington after Khrushchev first announced his ultimatum?

Hillenbrand: Actually, the contingency plans existed long before the Eisenhower Administration. They dated back to the late 40's or early 50's, formulated in case of any major harassment by the Soviets, partly as an outgrowth of the blockade, which, as you know, ended in 1949. They were drafted obviously when we had a virtual nuclear monopoly. They, of course, were revised occasionally, never on a timely basis, and they were revised during the Eisenhower period. They did not involve the same degree of organization of forces that would be used to reopen access. That took place later under the Kennedy Administration. So, while contingency planning, as such, continued in various groups under both Eisenhower and Kennedy, it differed little in essential respects from the earlier work. This, of course, was because the situation in and around Berlin itself had not changed.

On your first question, which is a very complicated one: Adenauer was a man who had a deep distrust of all things involving his countrymen. He felt that they could be led down the garden path very easily if the West made any proposals that might interest the Soviets and lead to serious negotiations about the future of Germany. He consistently overruled his foreign ministers, almost to the point of it being embarrassing. At times, however, he displayed surprising flexibility when that was necessary. Rusk found that he did accept, for example, some of the proposals that were put forth to the Soviets in some of the "non-papers" passed between Rusk and Gromyko in 1962.

The relationship of Adenauer with the two presidents was checkered. On the whole he had a good relationship with Eisenhower, but that, of course, was helped along by John Foster Dulles, with whom he had an even better relationship. There was mutual respect and dignity, and the German leader liked that. It is quite clear that Adenauer did not, for whatever reasons, feel he got anything like the same treatment from the Kennedy Administration. His first

visit to Washington during that Administration was a disaster. His ambassador in Washington at the time, Wilhelm Grewe, while a very intelligent man, was socially not very compatible with the White House, and while he tried to keep up with the French and British ambassadors, he quickly found that he had become a persona non grata. The Kennedy Administration eventually asked that Grewe be transferred out of Washington, and the Germans complied. The whole affair was unfortunate and both sides were to blame. But it was usually Grewe who had to deliver to the Kennedy White House the many concerns of Adenauer-- concerns that increasingly exasperated them.

Kaysen: And after Grewe was recalled, we did worse.

Hillenbrand: Of course, Adenauer was in his declining days: he was in his 80's at the time. In the fall of 1963, he was forced to retire from the Chancellorship. He was losing his grip. I always felt that the incompatibility between the Kennedy White House and German chancellor and his representative in Washington was unfortunate, but it was not disastrous for the Berlin crisis. There was later, of course, always some resentment on the part of the ambassador. In addition, Adenauer was set on improving Franco-German relations. I think one reason he sometimes accepted positions which he would have been disinclined to accept on their merits was because of pressure from the French, who were saying that we had to have a negotiating position with the Soviets. Anything, his great friend, General DeGaulle suggested on Berlin in the way of a conciliatory attitude, which came rarely enough, Adenauer would accept. Not that we ever used DeGaulle or tried to use DeGaulle to pressure the Germans.

Stanley Hoffmann: It seems that DeGaulle and Adenauer were united by a common distrust of the Germans. [Laughter.]

Blight: John Jenke.

John Jenke: I have a question about the issue of accommodation with the Soviets during the crisis and I want to tie that into the value of residual rights of Allied access to East Berlin. In your writings, you continually stress the theme of the importance of the four power legal status of Berlin. If you go back to the Clay tank confrontation at Checkpoint Charlie on October 27, 1961, the issue of Allied access to East Berlin was at the center of the controversy. How did the State Department view the issue of Allied access to East Berlin within the larger framework of maintaining the four powers' rights in Berlin?

Hillenbrand: By a process perhaps of legal rationalization, we had come to the conclusion already formulated in 1958: that we had three vital interests in Berlin which needed to be rigorously defined. While we would continue for the record to protest East German military activities in East Berlin, and other East German governmental activities in East Berlin as contrary to the four power agreements, those three vital interests were the ones that we would make the ultimate issue of. Kennedy listed these vital interests in his speech of July 25, 1961: continued Allied military presence in Berlin; unrestricted use of access routes to and from the city; freedom for West Berliners to choose their own form of government. Maybe this was only a legal

rationalization rather than logic. Then in a memorandum which Rusk, Kohler and I wrote later that summer to define a possible negotiating position on Berlin, we began with these three vital interests because, frankly, they had become gospel by that time. The inconsistency perhaps then can be found in our not maintaining the full panoply of our claims deriving from the original four power agreement. We were leaving a logical gap. Remember however, that we were not in Berlin because of any four power agreement but by right of conquest. Therefore, the freedom of access for our troops and the economic viability of West Berlin, where they were stationed -- all these derived from the right of conquest rather than the four power agreement.

Jenke: It is precisely this issue of viability that I think is important. In an unpublished recent paper, Marc Catudal argues that Clay looked at the East German confrontation at Checkpoint Charlie as a testing of American reactions for later confrontations at Checkpoints Alpha and Bravo, as a test of American resolve to defend its legal rights against East German encroachment. It seems to me, therefore, that there was a psychological dimension to this that had to be taken into account at because of rate of West Berliners leaving Berlin after the confrontation dropped precipitously. As you know, there had been serious economic attrition after the Wall but before the tank confrontation. Was the State Department at all concerned about challenging the East Germans in order to maintain the viability of West Berlin economically, politically and socially?

Hillenbrand: Well, we never accepted the "Clayism" that this was a test of our mettle, and that somehow or other the tank confrontation's purpose was to deter challenges at the other major checkpoints on the East-West Autobahn. Nor did general Norstad accept this, and he was supposed to be the person at the center of contingency planning by the United States. Of course, the Clay argument could be developed, but I think it derived merely from Clay's ignorance as to the contingency planning that had been done.

Jenke: Catudal mentions a telephone conversation when, during the tank confrontation, Clay was in a telephone booth in direct communication with McGeorge Bundy and with President Kennedy, apparently going over the heads of Generals Norstad and Clark, who were theoretically in charge. Is it possible that Clay was on a mission sanctioned directly by the White House, without regard either to the State Department or to the ordinary military chain of command in Berlin?

Hillenbrand: I can't answer that because I wasn't there. I was in Washington at the time, on the State Department's German desk. But it seems to me that if you and Catudal are correct, it would have been a bad practice to leave out of the circuit your supreme allied commander in Europe and your recruit commander in Germany. And I know of no such evidence that the telephone conversation to which you refer actually took place. What was Catudal's evidence?

Jenke: It was an interview with the tank commander and subsequent interviews with Lucius Clay.

Nye: In which Clay says that he was in a phone booth in direct communication with the President? Wait a minute! That particular practice, not so much of going over the heads of others which is a standard bureaucratic procedure, but of using an open line in a phone booth, strikes me as bizarre. Are you saying that in a situation as tense and potentially dangerous as the tank confrontation, Clay and Kennedy actually discussed strategy, presumably fully monitored by the Soviets and East Germans, over an open telephone line?

Jenke: The telephone booth to which they are referring here is at the Allied hut at Checkpoint Charlie. It is not literally a "phone booth." But the line is surely monitored, as you say. I can only cite Catudal's paper as evidence. But one wonders: If this did happen, do you suppose Clay, and perhaps Kennedy as well, actually wanted the Soviets to listen in on their confrontation? If so, why?

Hillenbrand: Frankly, that doesn't have the ring of truth to it, although I cannot disprove it. Catudal does very good and valuable work, as a rule. This whole episode strikes me as fascinating and well worth further study.

Kaysen: There was concern in the White House about the viability issue, about the emigration from West Berlin, about how much subsidy would be required. That in itself doesn't establish the connection between Clay's behavior and the result, but this was an issue about which people in the White House worried. At the time, I think that, not without reason, there was concern as to whether we were putting up all this display in Berlin for what would become an empty shell of a city. This seemed to us to be part of the overall Soviet strategy: A kind of psychological war of attrition in which they forced the West Berliners, despite our best efforts, to give up.

Hillenbrand: I must admit that we were less concerned in the State Department about that than the White House was, and we based this on our experience. I had lived through a number of apparent "collapses" of Berlin morale in the past, which were effectively used by the Berliners to push us into taking action which we were disinclined to take on other grounds. My own view was that as long as the Federal Republic was prepared, as it was under Adenauer, to subsidize the economy of West Berlin to the extent of some fifteen billion DM per year, that the economy would survive. If people left, we believed others would stream in from the West to take over the jobs that would be vacated in West Berlin. The same argument was used with the Wall: that Berlin would become demoralized. I think a lot of the things we did there had symbolic value, but I have never been persuaded that the fate of Berlin was going to be determined by the state of popular morale, which is always a fluctuating thing. Adenauer himself was never so concerned about the morale in West Berlin as the American government was at the time. Perhaps the Kennedy White House's inclination to "do something" to bolster the morale of the West Berliners derived from an incomplete appreciation of the capriciousness of their morale and the considerable extent to which it would, as we had learned, take care of itself.

James Cooney: I wanted to put the question that Carl Kaysen asked earlier, namely: what was the Federal Republic doing to have some impact on the Berlin situation? You talked of Rusk learning relatively early about the relation-

ship with the Soviets. I think there is a lesson here to be learned by any new administration coming in: why just interact at the highest level with Adenauer and the President? Why not have everyone, two, three, four layers down interacting as well. You seem to have been a key link at the time. What were the Germans doing? Were they trying to interact with everyone in the State Department who was continuing over from the Eisenhower to the Kennedy Administration?

Hillenbrand: They weren't sure what Kennedy would bring to American-German relations, so they were lying low until they could assess the situation better. They were a little puzzled by this young President and his even younger advisors. The Bay of Pigs did not make such a good impression on them, of course. I think if there had not been some elements of continuity in the State Department, they Germans might have tried themselves to lobby more to make the President become aware of Berlin's relevance.

Cooney: Were you concerned with the lack of concern? Where should the pressure have come then to make them realize the significance of what was going on?

Hillenbrand: The philosophy at the time was to let events take their course and let the new administration settle in and sooner or later the subject will come up. We knew that there would be, at some point, a meeting with Khrushchev, perhaps not at the summit level. We did not feel we had to set time limits; there was no ultimatum any longer. Khrushchev had withdrawn it in waiting for the new government to come into office.

Kaysen: The CDU had fairly strong and steady connections with important figures on the Hill, especially with the Republicans. Perhaps at least some of the politicians in the CDU were mindful, as Kennedy himself always was, of his rather thin political position. The Germans, I think, wanted to keep up some communications as to what the Germans thought about various matters, especially Berlin, of course.

Hillenbrand: What you are saying is correct. Birrenbach had contacts with McCloy and Dulles in the Eisenhower Administration. Of course, some people, even in his own government, regarded him as a busybody and an alarmist. You are right too, that there were unofficial, extra-governmental ties between German parliamentarians and people like McCloy. It is interesting, however, that in his memoirs, Birrenbach says nothing about Berlin. It seemed to fade in his assessment of what was important at the time.

William Jarosz: I would like to get back to the question of learning and the transmission of ideas from one administration to the next. While recognizing the confusion surrounding the hawks and doves labels and the lack of consistency in those labels, I think policy disagreements did continue. I am curious about the impact of events on those policy disagreements. You mentioned the importance of the Bay of Pigs as being a focal point for Kennedy's evaluation of military advice. I have always wondered about the impact of the crisis in Laos on the hawk/dove distinction, since it was one of the first major events of the Kennedy administration.

Hillenbrand: Laos was a constant irritation to those of us involved in the Berlin crisis, because at the four power meetings, the State Department officials and others would frequently wander off and discuss Laos. There is no doubt that it was very much on the mind of those in the Administration as well as the British, French and, to a lesser degree, the Germans. However, other than the fact that the discussion took place in the same forum, I didn't notice any conceptual or emotional overflow into the Berlin crisis.

Jarosz: Did you see Laos as a way of analyzing Soviet intentions and of defining a way in which to deal with the Soviets?

Hillenbrand: Not that I can recall. There weren't any conclusions drawn from the Laos crisis, especially as compared to those drawn from the Bay of Pigs experience. Of the two, the Bay of Pigs was thought to be the more significant, for a variety of reasons.

Nye: We are trying to understand the psychology of how real people behave in crises: whether people behave differently because they are a certain set of specific people or whether, given another crisis, the same people would behave differently? Did or did not the behavior change over people? For example, John Kennedy perhaps had a little less knowledge and displayed a little more alarmism. You also say Rusk perhaps learned more quickly? One person we have not mentioned is Doug Dillon. Did he play a role?

Hillenbrand: Only a minor one. He was looking more at Latin America and was basically focussed on the economic side.

Nye: Is there any way we can get any comparison about how much difference there was between the Kennedy people and the Eisenhower people on this question of how people react during a crisis? We know that the difference in backgrounds of the presidents obviously played a role in how decision were made. Were there other factors?

Hillenbrand: Eisenhower had an instinctive grasp of the issues. In his State Department there was an enormous reservoir of experience and of knowledge. During the Kennedy Administration, in contrast, the decision-making process was much more diffused because of the greater hierarchical structuring in the bureaucracy. There were a number of people in the White House who saw themselves as morally and emotionally committed to a point of view which they saw as contrary to the position emerging from the State Department, the Defense Department, and perhaps the Acheson memoranda as well. There was no continuing interest in the subject, however, once a given decision had been made. A clear emotional undertone was involved, but often little else. This was understandable since there was the definite feeling that the country was being "led down the garden path" into a nuclear exchange. Specifically Abe Chayes and George McGhee in the State Department, Roger Hilsman to a degree, Sorensen, Schlesinger, and a few others thought this. The point cannot be overemphasized: The involvement of people in the Kennedy White House in the Berlin issue was necessarily episodic and related only to specific problems that caught their attention. Lacking the means for carrying on a continuing process relating to Berlin issues, they were often constantly trying to re-

educate themselves, every time they engaged the issues. It was often, therefore, inefficient and counterproductive.

Blight: Where was McGeorge Bundy in all of this?

Hillenbrand: Bundy, I think, was "above it." He had a fair, thorough system of operating the National Security Council. He always gave us the impression that his judgement was based on a rational, fair, and unemotional consideration of all the issues which were pertinent.

Abelson: What about the people in the Department of Defense, namely McNamara and Nitze?

Hillenbrand: McNamara was taking his line from what he thought the President wanted, and the President wanted a show of strength. Nitze, I think, in his advice to McNamara, abetted that feeling. Certainly the Pentagon that summer was in favor of the all decisions that subsequently emerged, and in favor of some of the things that did not emerge.

Blight: I'd like your views on the impact of Khrushchev's two ultimatums on the two presidents and two administrations in question. What did each president think was the problem, in November 1958 and in June, 1961? Both seemed to have been surprised by what Khrushchev was asking for. I would like to have your comment on two things that you have mentioned.

1) Kennedy's administration was looking for a quick and total solution. There was, you have implied, a sense of being in a hurry when in fact there was no quick and total solution.

2) It does seem that there was a difference in the way the ultimatums were each received. There was the fear that the Soviets would actually go to war over all this in the Kennedy Administration. Was this something that concerned Eisenhower and you and others in the government at the time? Did you and your colleagues really believe Khrushchev would go to war either in 1958 or in 1961? Or was this fear something which really distinguished the two administrations and, specifically, the two presidents?

Hillenbrand: Obviously, we didn't know. There was some ambiguity in the language which Khrushchev used. We had to acknowledge the literal meaning of what he said though. In each case, we were given six months to knuckle under or Khrushchev said he would unilaterally turn over access to West Berlin to the East Germans, which was, of course, totally unacceptable. There was a point when, until the U-2 flights over the Soviet Union brought home to Eisenhower that there was no missile gap, he might have been more concerned. Then, however, as a commander, Eisenhower began thinking that the Soviets wouldn't dare to launch an attack unless they had some hidden missiles about which we knew nothing. Therefore, there was some basis for reassurance.

As you know, Kennedy campaigned on the basis of the missile gap, but Eisenhower felt that he could not disclose our sources of information, despite the U-2 incident of the spring of 1960. I think Kennedy must have been quickly informed that we had superiority, although diminishing, in terms of strategic weapons. Of course, any superiority or inferiority does not make a nuclear exchange thinkable or a feasible option in reality. But I do think it affects the way you receive a so-called "ultimatum" from an adversary.

Eisenhower felt confident after he discovered the truth -- that the missile gap was in our favor. But in June of 1961, I am not sure whether Kennedy had completely absorbed its significance. Or perhaps, by this time, Kennedy believed that, while we had superiority, the Soviets still retained some capacity to strike us with some nuclear weapons. That being so, and having little or no ability around Berlin to defend it with conventional arms -- perhaps this had something to do with the feeling of, as you say, nuclear crisis.

Abelson: Was there political mileage to be gained from nuclear superiority?

Hillenbrand: This was in the contingency planning for Berlin which Eisenhower inherited. This was not openly discussed. They were satisfied in the State Department that there was no other negotiating position that the Kennedy Administration could devise in the summer of 1961 other than complete capitulation that would be acceptable to the Soviets. There was always a feeling though that we had to offer something constructive that could be the basis for negotiations. It was important to try to discover, in other words, whether the June, 1961 "ultimatum" was a real take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum, or merely another ambiguous ploy in Soviet strategy regarding Berlin.

Blight: We have reached the half-way point in our meeting today. We will reconvene in fifteen or twenty minutes for more discussions on this subject.

DISCUSSION

2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Benina Berger-Gould: I am very interested in whether, in the Kennedy Administration, the Berlin situation was experienced as a crisis or more like a prolonged diplomatic contest? If John Kennedy had paid attention during the four years of negotiations and decisions approaching this, or had been properly briefed on it, would he have treated it more or less as a crisis from the beginning? And would it have remained a crisis?

Hillenbrand: Every administration has to allow for a certain period of "breaking in." After the first few months of orienting himself and then the "cold shower" he received at Vienna, John Kennedy became acutely aware of the crisis atmosphere. His people were more excitable and the feeling was much more intense after that point. Also, the Bay of Pigs represented a major distraction at first. Eisenhower's people were more experienced and there were fewer of them involved. Kennedy was getting advice from every body and his brother's uncle. With Dean Acheson on one side and Bobby Kennedy, who obviously held influence over his brother, on the other, it's no wonder Kennedy was confused sometimes. Acheson wanted no negotiation: we weren't to give an inch. It was to be a purely military confrontation. Bobby Kennedy (and others) then got scared to death by the path they had started down and had to wonder whether Khrushchev might actually mean it this time, as he had seemed to in Vienna.

Blight: Kennedy's campaign slogan was to "get America moving again." What you are saying sounds as if you believe they took this too seriously and were

out to get a group of very smart people together to "solve" all the problems of this country quickly and completely. I wonder if you would argue that sometimes it is better to do be more calm and do less.

Could you say something about Acheson? He seemed to be more successful for a time. However, there were people whom he perplexed. During this period, even among his peers, there were those such as Averell Harriman who sometimes felt he was not making sense and that he was becoming unaccountably extreme as a "hard-liner" (if I may use the term).

Hillenbrand: Acheson could never forget the attribution of the blame to him for the Korean war. He was haunted by this for the rest of his life. He was determined never to be blamed again for being a soft-liner, for allowing an adversary to miscalculate that the United States was too soft or complacent to fight. He therefore played the role of an elderly "enfant terrible," if you will, trying to stir up complacency wherever he believed he found it. He knew his hard-line view wouldn't all be accepted, but if only part of it was, he would, in his view, have achieved his central purpose.

I also do not think he had much respect for Kennedy personally. Acheson felt the President was rather immature, with little experience in foreign affairs. In this respect, his view of Kennedy may have been ironically rather like Khrushchev's at Vienna. Each felt Kennedy could easily be intimidated. Khrushchev tried to do it, while Acheson tried in his way to prevent it. Kennedy was also surrounded by people for whom Acheson had only minimal respect. He was also frustrated that he was not called back to play a greater role in the decision-making hierarchy.

Blight: What about Acheson's protege, Paul Nitze, the Assistant Secretary of Defense? Was he at all influential? Since he came from the Department of Defense and not State, and since he was a man of experience, I wonder if he felt shunted aside as the third man in the State Department.

Hillenbrand: He was even less than that. With regard to the Berlin Crisis, I don't recall that Nitze played much of a role at all.

Blight: Last year during the Cuban missile crisis meetings, it was clear that Berlin was in the forefront in Nitze's mind. He was convinced that Berlin, not Cuba, was central for Khrushchev. He said his first thought, when he learned of the Cuban missile deployment, was that Khrushchev's goal would be to increase his ability to coerce the Allies in Berlin, something he had been frustrated at the year before, mostly because of American nuclear superiority.

Hillenbrand: Nitze was the representative for the Department of Defense in the Berlin Task Force. I found him to be one who would "stick to his last" in the meetings that summer when the documents were being drawn up. He played an important role in that sense. Later on, as far as the Rusk operation was concerned and the talks with Gromyko, I don't think Nitze was involved at all.

He certainly was not troublesome, but rather cooperative. He did represent a hard line, which was the general Pentagon position, supportive of the Acheson line. When you brought in everyone from the Department of Defense, it was different. Then McNamara played the dominant role. Nitze was not a negative or unconstructive force, of course. He attended all the

meetings of the Four Power Group which was chaired by Foy Kohler, but he rarely spoke up, as I remember.

Jenke: How much did the Four Power Group talk about contingency planning? Was Nitze, who was responsible for developing some conventional force plans for Kennedy, in a position to be involved here?

Hillenbrand: The actual codification of contingency planning took place in the Berlin Task Force. One important aspect of the planning was our conclusion that the only really effective countermeasure we had -- the only thing that could really hurt -- was the denunciation of the interzonal trade agreement. This rapidly brought the East Germans to heel in 1960 since it came to be the greatest threat to the state of East German economy.

Berger-Gould: Going back to the early period, do you see the timing of Khrushchev's challenge in any way related to internal issues, pressure from Ulbricht, or other similar considerations? During our last meeting, Fyodor Burlatsky had spoken of this as one of the key motivations behind Khrushchev's maneuvers at the time.

Hillenbrand: Of course, de-Stalinization was already well advanced, but Khrushchev was still consolidating his power and perhaps needed to "throw a bone" to the conservative old Politburo and Soviet officials. That is one theory, but I personally don't think there is much to it.

It was always a mystery as to what motivated Khrushchev. It could have varied from day to day. The biggest "East Berlin bone in Khrushchev's throat" (and there were several), however, was certainly the refugee flow. That had to be stopped if the East German economy was not to collapse. That is also what he stressed in his memoirs. But I can tell you that neither ultimatum, in November of 1958 nor in June, 1961, was anticipated. We never understood, really, what he was trying to accomplish. All that I am sure of is that, at various times, Khrushchev seemed not to be able to tolerate the situation in Berlin, and this drove him to extremes.

Abelson: What did the United States under Eisenhower/Dulles leadership want in comparison to the Kennedy Administration? That is, was there a big picture view of what they desired in Berlin? Was Eisenhower working more for reunification, while John Kennedy was more set on the status quo and in favor of the institutionalization of the division, for example?

Hillenbrand: Eisenhower was always a little ambivalent. He felt that the ongoing, large-scale presence of United States forces in Europe was an "abnormal situation." They would eventually have to be withdrawn, but, of course, never under Soviet threat. We could not, however, accept a unilateral withdrawal of our troops from West Berlin. The Alliance is always a consideration. Therefore, we were committed to reunification, but with fading conviction that it was achievable. The Kennedy period represented a change from a concentration on the term "reunification" to a stress on the term "self-determination." It struck us experienced hands in the State Department as a change without a difference. I don't think, for example, that Eisenhower would have reacted very differently if the wall had been constructed when he was in office; i.e. he would have had to let it go up also.

Abelson: So containment, in the classic sense, was more the priority then?

Hillenbrand: Eisenhower saw the abnormality of the situation, but he also recognized the limits of what one could do about it. There was always the question of at what point in time and at what stage in the threat do you start to talk about dissolution of the Alliance? This had been a perpetual discussion within NATO. We had to try to figure out the continuing mission of the Alliance. As you know, the discussion continues to this day.

Jarosz: Within the Berlin Task Force, was there a designated Soviet expert to issue an authoritative opinion as to what Soviet intentions probably were.

Hillenbrand: Malcolm Toon and Edward Frears were both consulted. Whoever was in charge of the Office of Soviet Affairs was "ipso facto" a member of the Berlin Task Force. Tommy Thompson, of course, once he had returned from Moscow, came to be a key advisor.

Jarosz: It's odd that when you see the classic division of "hard-liners" and "soft-liners," people like Thompson and Bohlen are put in the category of "soft-liners." Could you define "hard" and "soft" lines as having to do with negotiations whether or not the appropriate place for a show of strength is before negotiations?

Hillenbrand: If you phrase it that way, then maybe only Acheson and the Pentagon would be in that category, and after the second memorandum, even Acheson faded. Actually, Bohlen was not a "soft-liner." He was a diplomat of finesse and did not believe in needlessly stirring up the Soviet Union. He also, however, did not believe in capitulation, nor did Thompson. Also, we need to define "negotiation." Even I did not think a real basis for negotiation existed at the time.

Blight: Why were there all those contingency plans, for example for cutting off access? What was the process like in November 1958 when every one was surprised; and again in 1961? How does the State Department handle such a "shocking" event such as this was. What happens when the Soviets surprise you in this way, apparently provoking a crisis?

Hillenbrand: In those cases, the German and Soviet experts get together and thrash it out. The first draft is to provide guidance for the Press Secretary to have something to tell the press (i.e. a holding operation for the public). During the Eisenhower Administration, everything was on more of an ad hoc basis. You had more or less the same group meeting regularly on these topics. There is nothing profound in it. You scratch your heads and do the best you can to understand what had happened and why, and where you go from here.

Blight: Would you agree that the whole mood in the Kennedy Administration in responding to its ultimatum was rather different than Eisenhower's? What was so upsetting in 1961? Let me put the point provocatively, by way of analogy. The Soviets have always claimed that the Cuban m'ssile crisis was launched not by the missiles, but by Kennedy's "overreactive" quarantine speech. Likewise, is there any validity in their claim that the 1961 Berlin crisis was not a

function of Khrushchev's note of June 4, but rather of Kennedy's overreaction to it, which was quite unlike Eisenhower's in 1958?

Hillenbrand: First of all, hysteria is contagious. Secondly, because of the inexperience of the members of the administration at the time, this tended to seem like an issue of war and peace. Third, there was a fundamental temperamental difference between Eisenhower and Kennedy. Finally, the press has the unique ability to create the psychological atmosphere and increase the level of urgency, and it most definitely did so during this period. All these factors acted together to create a psychology of crisis and the belief that I gather some close to the President had formed that war was right around the corner.

Berger-Gould: Are you saying, therefore, that there was a basic lack of continuity between the two administrations -- that the new Administration was caught off guard by Khrushchev at a vulnerable moment, just as it was learning the ropes?

Hillenbrand: Suffice to say that some basic aspects of the educative process simply had not taken place yet. If you compare the Camp David summit with the meeting in Vienna, it is obvious that at Camp David there was much more respect and at Vienna Kennedy faced stronger language, although the content of what was being proposed might have been basically the same. The difference in the summits is interesting: Khrushchev, I think, would never have dreamt of trying to intimidate Eisenhower in the belligerent way he tried to work over Kennedy. If he had, I think it would have had little effect, in any event. I have always felt that Khrushchev's behavior in Vienna was the result of a terrible miscalculation on his part. It had exactly the opposite effect he intended. Kennedy came home full of resolve on the Berlin issue, as subsequent events showed. He was young, but Khrushchev mistakenly thought he could bully him.

The slow response was due to the fact that we were scattered all over the country at the time the Wall went up. There had been no prediction on either the intelligence or diplomatic side as to what they did do. It was basically an intelligence failure. In other words, the United States was not prepared to take military action. We had contingency plans -- dozens and hundreds of them -- for everything imaginable but the sealing of the border of East Berlin.

Blight: Did you see the inevitability of all this at some point, specifically concerning the building of the wall?

Hillenbrand: Everything was being done in the context of a general uncertainty as to what would happen next. However, when certain events did occur, what Marc Catudal says in his book on this subject is true: "Even in times of crisis, rational decision-making can take place." I mean this: that our response to the Wall was measured, realistic, and, in the end, sensible. I believed then, as now, that if you try to think your way into a strategy for tearing down the Wall, you get nowhere. They would build another wall. And another. West Berliners leave in droves, etc.

Jenke: There is some question about 1959 and the impact of the death of John Foster Dulles on the western negotiating position toward the Soviet Union. Jack Schick, in his book, asserts that after this event there was a leadership vacuum in the Alliance and the British secured a better negotiating position and therefore enhanced their role in the process. My first question is what was the State Department's reaction specifically with regard to decisions in sending signals to the Soviet Union. Secondly, was there any subsequent assurance that the United States would reassert leadership over the Alliance's negotiating position?

Hillenbrand: First of all, I do not think there was a real vacuum in leadership. Secondly, if there was one, the British certainly did not fill it. Also, you must remember that Adenauer was not totally out of the picture yet. More importantly, much of the process was already under way at this point.

Jenke: You mention that Eisenhower didn't want a summit of the heads of State unless there was substantial progress in Geneva. This was miscommunicated to the Soviets, however. The part about wanting a summit got through but the phrase about needing "substantial progress" was forgotten. Is this the reason Eisenhower changed his position, i.e. that the miscommunication was a "fait accompli."

Hillenbrand: The change was actually due to Herter, who felt there had been sufficient concessions and it would be a good idea to allow a summit. He was responsible for talking to Eisenhower and convincing him.

Blight: At our last meeting, our guest, Fyodor Burlatsky expressed the Soviet fear of an uprising in East Berlin in 1961. Even if there was little uncertainty as to whether or not the Soviets could squelch any kind of revolt, there was always the uncertainty about what your actions would or could be, and especially what the reaction of the other side would be to those actions. This is why, in the end, Khrushchev thought the building of the Wall represented a victory. Burlatsky said (roughly): "My former boss (Khrushchev) was telling you we had a very big problem and you didn't -- wouldn't -- hear. All you heard was Khrushchev saying 'I want Berlin; I want Hamburg,' when, actually, what he was saying was 'I want out!'" When I spoke last month with Hannes Adomeit in Ebenhausen, he said he believed that, while the likelihood of an uprising was low, the consequences of such an event greatly worried the Soviets, because Hungary, 1956 was on their minds. Did western diplomats and officials understand this intense Soviet fear of the border getting out of control?

Hillenbrand: It's an interesting point of view. However, I am skeptical and I wonder whether this is deliberate misinformation on the part of Burlatsky. This idea is not realistic, in my opinion. I go back to the fact that Khrushchev had access to all our contingency plans. He knew there was nothing in them that was remotely related to any military actions with respect to East Berlin or even actions for that matter anywhere in East Germany. In the event of an uprising, Khrushchev knew we had no plans to intervene. Besides, how could we? There were, and are, better than twenty divisions of the Red Army in East Germany. We would have been totally without the capacity to come to

the aid of any uprising, if that is what Burlatsky (and Adomeit) believe Khrushchev was afraid of.

Just as in the United States you find a broad range of opinions even among high officials (e.g. some were worried about things others felt were highly unlikely to happen), so perhaps in the Soviet Union you had, and still have, similar differences.

Blight: Unfortunately, we are out of time. We would like to thank Ambassador Hillenbrand for his time and enlightening discussion. We will meet again next Tuesday to hear what Marc Trachtenberg has to say about this fascinating period.